

Suggested Remarks
Daniel Moore, OEE Chief
Opening of the Clean Air Booth
Session Road, Baguio City
February 27, 2006, 9:00 a.m.

Ten years ago, the notion of closing this historic Session Road was unthinkable - nobody would have imagined themselves walking from the market up to the mall. Today, however, we are seeing people walking leisurely along, because the Session Road allows them more space to shop and more room to enjoy the return of the "scent of pines".

The opening of the Energy and Clean Air Project ("ECAP") booth on Session Road is USAID's contribution to disseminating information on the value and importance of clean air. Air, after all, is one of the few remaining free commodities. However, perhaps because air is free, we have not been treating it very well!

Statistics shows that air pollution ails most big cities in the Philippines, including right here in Baguio City. The statistics are frightening. In Manila alone, the World Bank estimated that each year, air pollution causes 1,300 deaths, 45,000 emergency room visits, 11 million "restricted activity days," 35 million respiratory symptom days, and over 5 billion pesos in health costs! And as we all know, the transportation sector is the biggest contributor to air pollution.

I am pleased to learn that Baguio City is taking the initiative to bring back the "scent of pines." For one, the Baguio Bantay Kalinisan, Inc. (BBKI) and the Task Force have been diligent in mitigating smoke-belching problems in the city. Making Session Road vehicle-free - for even a week - complements this initiative, and reminds citizens of how things might be different. Aside from ECAP, USAID's other

assistance to Baguio City is the Clean Cities Program of our Sustainable Energy Development Project ("SEDP"). Clean Cities encourages and supports the formation of coalitions to promote the use of cleaner alternative fuels, such as the coco biodiesel. Perhaps you have heard of the Clean Cities' advocacy initiative, the "Fuels for Life Movement" which was launched here last year.

On behalf of USAID, I would like to commend Mayor Yaranon and his council for this innovative step, for the foresight, the courage, of making Session Road vehicle-free for a week. While a few people might take exception to this experiment, most people should appreciate what is being communicated - helping local citizens to imagine what a smoke-free Baguio would feel (and smell) like.

In this regard, I urge you to enjoy this weeklong, vehicle-free Session Road and experience the difference that this initiative makes. So let us all walk that "extra mile" for cleaner air in Baguio City.

Finally, of course, please visit our Clean Air Booth and learn about how we can all contribute to improving the air that we breathe.

MABUHAY at magandang umaga sa inyong lahat!!

